

XIV.—*Notes on the Paradise-birds of British New Guinea.*

By A. P. GOODWIN, of Lismore, N.S.W.

IN the early part of 1889 I left my home on the Richmond River for the purpose of visiting New Guinea, where I intended to spend a few months in collecting ornithological specimens and in acquiring for myself that knowledge of the feathered tribes which can only be gained by personal observation.

I arrived at Port Moresby at a very favourable moment, for only a few days after my landing I had an opportunity of joining an exploring party whose object was to reach the summit of Mount Owen Stanley. The leader of the expedition was Sir William Macgregor, then Governor or Administrator of that recently acquired British colony. I gladly embraced the opportunity, and it is sufficient here to say that I made the journey along with Sir William as far as Mount Musgrave, where he left some members of the expedition, while he himself, with a few select followers, made a successful ascent of Mount Owen Stanley*.

On his return to Mount Musgrave I again joined His Excellency on his homeward march, which was also successfully accomplished.

During that short and decisive trip into the heart of British New Guinea I was fortunate enough to meet with examples of twelve different species of Paradise-birds, a short account of which will, I think, be interesting to those who have not had the opportunity of seeing these splendid birds in their native haunts.

Our expedition followed the course of the Vanapa River, on the banks of which we heard the cry of the Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise (*Seleucides niger*), but, time not permitting us to go hunting, we did not procure a specimen of this, one of the finest birds of the whole family. The Twelve-wired Paradise-bird inhabits the swampy districts near the coast, where it is not easily obtained. Its call can be heard at a

* See Proc. Roy. Geogr. Soc. 1889, p. 605, for an account of this expedition.

long distance and is a double note, difficult to imitate even by the natives.

Leaving the Vanapa River, we ascended the lower mountains, where we encountered the King Bird of Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*), of which we secured several specimens during our first day's march. This was the first time I had seen this little bird in all its beauty. Its legs, when it is alive, are of a clear cobalt-blue colour. I had previously only seen prepared specimens, in which the legs become black and shrivelled. I found it to be a restless little creature, not easily seen in the dense scrub, nor was it met with above an altitude of 2000 feet. Its food consists of seeds and berries, of which there is abundance in this locality.

The next Paradise-bird met with was the Raggi's Paradise-bird (*Paradisea raggiana*), which is also found on the lower ranges of the mountains, and is rarely ever seen above an altitude of 3000 feet. One evening I observed a number of this species flying from one tree to another, evidently feeding and dancing, as I am told is their habit. *P. raggiana* lives on fruit, which generally grows on high trees in Papua; and as nature has provided these birds with a thick skin to keep their long plumage from falling out, it requires a strong charge of the gun to bring them to the ground. It is to be regretted that the long red plumes soon lose their brightness after death.

We came across the magnificent Rifle-bird (*Ptilorhis magnifica*) on Mount Kowald, as also on Mount Belford, at an altitude of 3000 feet and over. This bird haunts the dense scrub, usually in the neighbourhood of the running streams. It is solitary and wild and shy, requiring some skill to secure it. On Mount Belford, at the altitude of 4000 feet, we first heard the call of Lawes's Paradise-bird (*Parotia lawesi*), the local form of the Six-wired Bird of Paradise, but did not succeed in obtaining a specimen until we had crossed the Joseph River and ascended Mount Musgrave to the same altitude. Here I secured an example of this beautiful bird. Our camp was near one of their play-grounds, so I had a good

opportunity of watching this bird's movements. It has a strong resemblance to the Silky Bower-bird of New South Wales (*Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus*) both in form and habits. It has a similar bill, beautiful blue eyes, and strong legs, and, like the Bower-bird, is very cautious, restless, and swift. It has also a similar flight. Although *P. lawesi* does not build a bower, still it has its play-ground, where a number of these birds (from six to eight) may be found playing together. The play-ground may be easily known by the colour of the soil and by the clearance of the surrounding underbrush.

The Sickle-billed Paradise-bird (*Drepanornis cervinicauda*) resorts to the same zone, but is very seldom seen. We were unable to sight one, although we heard its call several times during our stay in the mountains. It keeps to the topmost branches of the highest trees, where it pours out its song, which is said to resemble that of the Nightingale.

At an altitude of 5000 feet we came across the Superb Bird of Paradise (*Lophorhina minor*). This species flutters about on the highest perches it can find, and looks no larger than a butterfly. It is needless to say that few specimens of it were secured. Its call is similar to that of *Parotia lawesi*, but is not so strong. The most striking feature of this beautiful little bird is its cape, which it has the power to expand so as to form a half-circle over its back. On Mount Musgrave, at an altitude of 6000 feet, we also came across a fine species of *Epimachus* (*E. macleayanae*). Up to that time only one specimen of this splendid bird was known. This had been discovered two years previously by Mr. Belford, who was at this time one of our party. This specimen had been sent to Sydney, where Dr. Ramsay, of the Australian Museum, had described it. This bird differs materially from *Epimachus maximus* in that the breast and flank-feathers are of a rusty colour shaded with purple. It inhabits the mountain regions at an altitude of from 6000 to 9000 feet, above which no Paradise-birds were found. The call of *E. macleayanae* is a shrill double note, similar to the striking of a pair of clappers.

In the same locality we procured several female specimens of the Stephanie's Paradise-bird (*Astrarchia stephanie*), being the first examples of that sex yet discovered. The male bird, of which there is only one specimen known, was described by Dr. Meyer of Dresden from a specimen sent to Europe by the late Mr. Hunstein. It may be noted that, although we remained for some time in the same locality, no specimen of this rare species was seen after the first day or two. As I had not the good fortune to come across one myself, I am unable to give much information on this very interesting discovery.

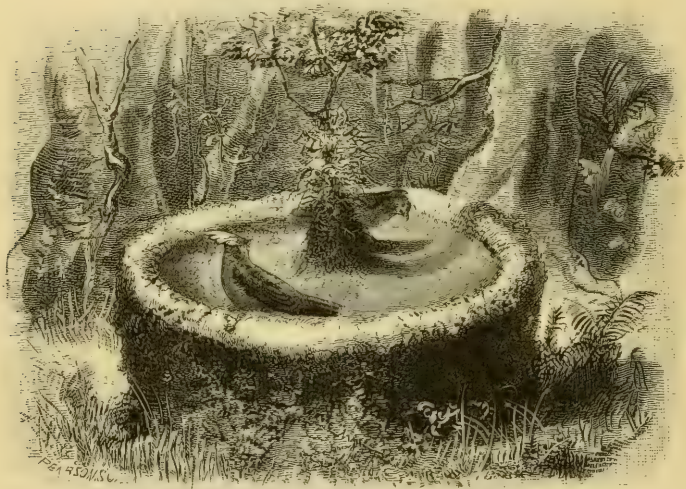
The Golden-winged Bird of Paradise (*Diphyllodes chrysoptera*), it is safe to say, is only found in the interior, as we did not come across it until we were on the Knutsford range.

The only new Bird of Paradise discovered during the expedition was a bird very similar to the Golden Bird of Paradise (*Xanthomelus aureus*), and I have no doubt it will prove to be a species of this genus when the specimen comes to be examined. It was met with on ascending Mount Owen Stanley. I therefore propose to name it *Xanthomelus macgregori*, in honour of our leader—the first white man who has reached the summit of this range. It is of the same size as its prototype, with head, back, and wings of a golden-orange, but the breast and abdomen are black. The feathers on the head are parted in the middle and form a small crest in front; the beak and feet are similar to those of *X. aureus*. The tail in the single specimen obtained had been shot away.

The Birds of Paradise are usually divided into three groups, to the first and second of which all the above-named species belong. The third group consists of the Bower-birds, the most interesting of which that we met with was one of the genus *Amblyornis*, also a new bird to science. As it was found on Mount Musgrave, I propose to call it *Amblyornis musgravianus*. It is somewhat larger than *A. subalaris*, and measures about 10 inches from the tip of the beak to the end of the tail; the wings and back are of a dull darkish green; the throat, breast, and belly of a uniform brown;

under the wings of a yellowish brown. The crest is of a deep golden-orange, slightly streaked with darkish brown and the centre-feathers tipped with the same colour. The iris is brown, the base of beak horn-colour, and the feet are black. Like the rest of the Bower-birds, it is of a shy disposition, and it requires great patience and prudence to obtain specimens. It is keen-sighted and quick of motion; its notes, of which there are several, are clear and sharp. During our stay on Mount Musgrave I had frequent opportunities

Fig. 1.

Bower of *Amblyornis musgravianus*.

of observing this interesting bird. I had never seen a more beautiful bower or play-ground than that which it constructs. It was, however, eclipsed by another which I came across on our return journey on Mount Musgrave, namely that of *Amblyornis subalaris*. The first bower of *A. musgravianus* met with was constructed of moss. It was about two feet high, and built evenly round a small tree, looking at first sight like a marble fountain. The small sticks placed in various positions on the tree gave the idea of jets of water. The

outer rim of the playground was about three inches higher than the inside course, which was smooth and even.

One day on Mount Belford, the member of the party from which it takes its name came into camp with a specimen of *A. subalaris*, and urged me not to leave without seeing the playground of this species. I am glad to say I followed his advice. At a short distance off the bower from the back looks like a cartload of sticks rounded on the top. On going round to the front I saw the most beautiful building ever

Fig. 2.



Bower of *Amblyornis subalaris*.

constructed by a bird, to which, however, my poor description cannot do justice. The edifice (fig. 2) was dome-like, only half covered over, and exposed to view inside a ring or circus. In the centre of this was built a bank of moss, decorated with flowers and seed, out of which grew a small tree interlaced with sticks. The *A. subalaris* is smaller than the one I have named *A. musgravianus*, but otherwise similar in colour.

I was certainly well rewarded for my trouble on this occa-

sion, and felt much indebted to Mr. Belford for having shown me the most interesting sight which I witnessed during the whole of the expedition.

This concludes my notes, which were taken under many disadvantages incidental to a pioneer undertaking ; but if I have given any new information on the subject of Paradise-birds, be it ever so little, I shall feel that I have been well rewarded for the hardships which I endured.

XV.—*On a Collection of Birds made by the late Mr. J. S. Jameson on the Aruwimi River, Upper Congo.* By Captain G. E. SHELLEY, F.Z.S.

(Plate V.)

IN 1882 I had the pleasure of describing Mr. Jameson's ornithological collections from Matabele Land*. It is with the greatest regret that I now have to give a final list of the birds obtained by this ardent young naturalist during his residence at Yambuya, on the Upper Congo, where he was stationed with the rear guard of the Stanley Expedition for the relief of Emin Pasha. His untimely death has been a loss to science, which naturalists will regret equally with the loss of those scientific pioneers of ornithology in Eastern Africa, Drs. G. A. Fischer and R. Böhm, both cut off in their prime, when there was every reason to expect that their work had only just commenced. Mr. Stanley is more celebrated as an explorer than as a naturalist, and the unfortunate death of Mr. Jameson, who would have contributed much to the scientific interest of the expedition, is therefore the more to be deplored.

Small though the present collection be, it will be found to be of great interest to students of Ethiopian ornithology, and is in some respects extremely important as regards the geographical distribution of species, as it serves to show how small is our knowledge of the range of African birds, and how little we are acquainted with the physical configuration

* See 'Ibis,' 1882, pp. 236, 349.